

REMARKS

INTRODUCTION:

In accordance with the foregoing, no claims have been cancelled, claim 1 has been amended, and claims 25 and 26 have been added. No new matter is being presented, and approval and entry are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-26 are pending and under consideration.

In the Office Action at pages 2-3, items 2 and 3, the Examiner restricted the application and withdrew claims 20-24.

Additionally, in the Office Action at page 5, item 10, the Examiner allowed claims 16 and 17. Reconsideration is requested.

ENTRY OF AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.116:

Applicants request entry of this Rule 116 Response because:

(a) the amendments were not earlier presented because Applicants believed in good faith that the cited art did not disclose the present invention as previously claimed; and

(b) the amendments do not significantly alter the scope of the claims and place the application at least into a better form for purposes of appeal.

The Manual of Patent Examining Procedures sets forth in Section 714.12 that "any amendment that would place the case either in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal may be entered." Moreover, Section 714.13 sets forth that "the Proposed Amendment should be given sufficient consideration to determine whether the claims are in condition for allowance and/or whether the issues on appeal are simplified." The Manual of Patent Examining Procedures further articulates that the reason for any non-entry should be explained expressly in the Advisory Action.

CHANGES TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Changes have been made to the specification only to place it in preferred and better U.S. form for issuance. No new matter has been added.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103:

In the Office Action, at page 4, item 6, the Examiner rejected claims 1-4, 6-8, 11, and 18-19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Helms et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,869,801 hereinafter Helms) in view of Kato et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,885,054 – hereinafter Kato). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

In the Office Action, at page 4, item 7, the Examiner also rejected claims 9-10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Helms in view of Kato, as applied to claims 1 and 8 above, and further in view of Stevens et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,810,931 – hereinafter Stevens). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

In the Office Action, at page 4, item 8, the Examiner rejected claims 5 and 12-15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Helms in view of Kato, as applied to claims 1 and 8 above, and further in view of Carr et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,158,951 – hereinafter Carr). The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. Applicants traverse this rejection and respectfully request reconsideration.

Regarding the rejection of claims 5 and 12-15, claims 5 and 12 have been rewritten in independent form.

Claim 5 recites: "...wherein the mounting comprises a number of mounting elements extending radially outwardly from a central portion, each mounting element defining a number of mounting surfaces, and each mounting surface being associated with a respective mounting plane."

And claim 12 recites: "...each mounting element defining a number of mounting surfaces, and each mounting surface being associated with a respective mounting plane..."

Carr discloses wafer support blocks 50 with lips 55 provided to center the wafer and prevent horizontal movement of the wafer. The Examiner appears to assert that the wafer support blocks 50 with lips 55 define a number of mounting surfaces. In contrast, however, the wafer support blocks 50 of Carr only define a single wafer support plane (See Carr, at col. 3 lines 11-21, and FIGS. 1-5, and 9).

Applicants respectfully submit that even assuming *arguendo*, that one of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated to combine Helms, Kato, and Carr, as suggested by the Examiner, such a combination neither discloses nor suggests a mounting comprising "...a number of mounting elements extending radially outwardly from a central portion, each mounting element defining a number of mounting surfaces, and each mounting surface being associated with a respective mounting plane."

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 5 and 12 patentably distinguish over the cited art, and should be allowable for at least the above-mentioned reasons. Further, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 13-15, which depend from independent claim 12, should be allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 12, as well as for the additional features recited therein.

Regarding the rejection of claims 1-4, 6-11, and 18-19, amended, independent claim 1 recites: "...the support comprises a number of limbs extending radially outwardly from a central hub, at a constant angle relative to a plane of the processing surface, the limbs being configured to contact the edges of different sized substrates in use so as to support the substrate in a support plane substantially parallel to the plane of the processing surface...."

Helms discloses an unloading arm 7 used to place a substrate (e.g. a silicon wafer) 8 onto raising pins 18,18' and 18" (FIG. 2, and col. 2, line 47 to col. 3, line 32). The raising pins 18 may be raised and lowered, together with the cage 17, relative to the substrate support 14. To position the substrate 8 ready for processing, the raising pins 18 and cage 17 are lowered such that the substrate 8 comes to rest on the substrate support 14, and the clamping ring 35, which forms part of cage 17, holds the wafer in place. Helms does not disclose or suggest a number of limbs extending radially outwardly from a central hub, at a constant angle relative to a plane of the substrate support 14.

Kato discloses a carrying device for semiconductor wafers including a wafer stage 1, on which a wafer may be inspected. The wafer stage 1 comprises a number of supporting arms 12 arranged about a rotatable and elevatable supporting shaft 11 (column 3, line 10-14). Each supporting arm 12 is upwardly curved, so that the wafer stage 1 can hold semiconductor wafers of different diameters (column 3, line 66 to column 4, line 4). Kato does not disclose or suggest a number of limbs extending radially outwardly from a central hub, at a constant angle relative to a plane of a processing surface.

Applicants respectfully submit that even assuming *arguendo*, that one of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated to combine Helms and Kato, as suggested by the Examiner, such a combination neither discloses nor suggests a support comprising "...a number of limbs extending radially outwardly from a central hub, at a constant angle relative to a plane of the processing surface, the limbs being configured to contact the edges of different sized substrates in use so as to support the substrate in a support plane substantially parallel to the plane of the processing surface...."

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the cited art, and should be allowable for at least the above-mentioned reasons. Further, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-4, 6-11, and 18-19, which ultimately depend from independent claim 1, should be allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1, as well as for the additional features recited therein.

NEW CLAIMS

Applicants respectfully submit that for at least similar reasons as those stated in the section regarding the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103, new claims 25-26 patentably distinguish over the cited art and should be allowable.

CONCLUSION:

In accordance with the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding objections and rejections have been overcome and/or rendered moot, and further, that all pending claims patentably distinguish over the cited art. Thus, there being no further outstanding objections or rejections, the application is submitted as being in condition for

allowance which action is earnestly solicited. At a minimum, this Amendment should be entered at least for purposes of Appeal as it either clarifies and/or narrows the issues for consideration by the Board.

If the Examiner has any remaining issues to be addressed, it is believed that prosecution can be expedited and possibly concluded by the Examiner contacting the undersigned attorney for a telephone interview to discuss any such remaining issues.

If there are any underpayments or overpayments of fees associated with the filing of this Amendment, please charge and/or credit the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date: April 15, 2004

By: Michael A. Bush
Michael A. Bush
Registration No. 48,893

1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: (202) 434-1500
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501